

Bertrand Stone (b. 1997)

Concerto in E minor for Flute and Orchestra (2016)

- I. Moderato, ma poco agitato
- II. Adagio espressivo
- III. Allegro energico

The piece begins with a subdued but agitated A minor chord sustained in the oboes and violins. The solo flute enters with a dotted figure which forms the motivic basis for much of the movement. Following a dialogue between solo flute and horn, the tonal center of E minor emerges unequivocally as the orchestra forcefully presents its version of the main theme. The solo flute re-enters over a dominant pedal, and leads a steady increase in intensity which culminates in another orchestral outburst at the beginning of the first bridge passage. The bridge concludes with a decisive arrival in G major. The solo flute presents the second subject, which foreshadows the main theme of the next movement. The development begins with an unexpected modulation to F-sharp minor and a modified statement of the first orchestral interlude. A modulation to F minor follows immediately, and the thematic material introduced so far is dissected over a bubbling in the clarinets. Following a sequence of rapid modulations, the solo flute enters with a false recapitulation which leads to the cadenza. After the cadenza, the true recapitulation commences with the theme in the first clarinet. The slightly extended second bridge passage arrives in E via a detour through G-sharp minor and C-sharp minor. Following a statement of the second subject in E, the coda begins with a return to E minor. The movement concludes with an extended statement of the first subject.

The idyllic second movement provides a respite from the dramatic contrasts of the first. The movement begins in A-flat, a diminished fourth away from E minor. The solo flute introduces the principal subject, a lyrical theme in compound triple meter. This subject is elaborated by the cellos, in canon with the solo flute. The oboe explores part of the melody in minor, in counterpoint with the violins. The developmental middle section begins with a modulation to A major, and progresses to a major arrival in F. After a brief transition, the solo flute begins the recapitulation, which reaches a more intense climax than does the first section. Another brief transitional passage leads to the coda.

We thus arrive at the rondo-finale, which, with its humorous character, also plays the role of a scherzo. The movement begins with a spirited theme in the solo flute over a pizzicato ostinato in the strings. Following a dialogue in the winds, the orchestra takes up the flute's theme, now in B minor, and embarks upon a transition thematically connected with the first movement. The solo flute introduces the second subject in G major. After a response from the orchestra, the flute leads a return to E minor for the second iteration of the rondo, which in turn leads directly to the playful middle section in B major. The flute again leads a return to E minor for the final reprise of the rondo, which is unexpectedly interrupted by the winds. The flute – as if surprised by this unusual turn of events – responds with a sequence of parallel arpeggios set against the orchestra's forceful statements of the main rhythmic motif. This dialogue leads to a triumphant statement of the second subject in E major, echoed by the solo flute. As before, the statement of the second subject is followed by a return to the relative minor, but here the flute deftly maneuvers back to E major for the resounding coda.